



Hospitalist Testifies before Congress: "Observation Status Merits Significant Reform"



Dr. Sheehy, second from right, testifying before the Committee

On Tuesday, May 20, Dr. Ann Sheehy testified on behalf of the Society of Hospital Medicine before the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee Hearing "Current Hospital Issues in the Medicare Program," focusing on observation status, short inpatient stays, and payment audits.

Dr. Sheehy did an impressive job representing hospitalists and SHM, challenging the Committee members to come up with meaningful and common-sense solutions to a pretty serious problem in Medicare. Her testimony focused on the difficulties faced by hospitalists, hospitals

and their patients in navigating and dealing with the consequences of observation status policy, including Medicare's recent 2-midnight rule. Her research at the University of Wisconsin Hospital was featured extensively and was instrumental in illuminating the myriad issues with current observation policies. She closed by saying:

Observation status merits significant reform, and the 2-midnight rule is not the answer... Medicare policy should be aligned with clinical realities and should also be rooted in allowing physicians to provide the care patients need... [Any reform] will not be successful unless there is concurrent reform of the federal auditing programs that enforce observation rules.

As an active member of SHM's Grassroots Network and Public Policy Committee (PPC), Dr. Sheehy has been instrumental in helping SHM better understand and address the problems surrounding the use of observation status. Dr. Sheehy's continued efforts helped grow her leadership at SHM, where she played a critical role in last week's hearing and has developed ever-deepening relationships with policymakers.

Congratulations to Dr. Sheehy for her excellent testimony and congratulations to all active members of the SHM Grassroots



Dr. Sheehy talking with Representative Jim McDermott (D-WA)

Network. Members of the Network participate in Hill Day Congressional visits, respond to action alerts, and do much more to ultimately help make events like this happen. Member involvement is vital in positioning SHM and hospitalists as experts on observation status policy and as partners in finding meaningful solutions to broken policies. To learn more and join the Grassroots Network, visit www.hospitalmedicine.org/grassroots.

In case you missed the live hearing last week, you can watch a recording from C-SPAN at <http://www.c-span.org/video/?319488-1/medicare-hospital-coverage>. Dr. Sheehy's part of the testimony starts at 1h:40m:30s.
